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HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)
Editor: MAGANBHAI P. DESAI

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SERVICE SHOULD TOUCH LIFE AT ALL POINTS

(*By Vinoba*)

[The Navajivan Mandal was started in Orissa in 1946 for the service of the Adivasi area. Since then constructive work is carried on there under the guidance and leadership of Shri Maltidevi Chaudhari. On 25-5-'55 a meeting of the members of the Mandal was held at Udayagiri in the Ganjam district of the Orissa State when Shri Vinoba was present. The following is from the speech delivered by him on the occasion.]

Wherever, till now, service of the Adivasis has been undertaken, it has been carried on with a special aim in view. As a consequence it has developed a special technique as well as a certain lopsidedness. We have now to reconsider our position.

Till now service was rendered to sections of our people like the Harijans and the Adivasis. It was perhaps inevitable in the beginning. But now under Swaraj the activities of service we undertake should not be separate; our activity of service should be one whole.

Our work of service started in a curious way. What is known as political or national activity which had the object of freeing the nation from slavery was the first to be taken up. Then the Khadi movement was started with a view to establish contact with the common people and to give some sort of relief to them in their hardships. Even in Khadi work we began with weaving. In those days weaving was done with mill yarn. It was then noticed that this practice led to dependence on an outside agency; it did not solve the problem that faced us. So the necessity of spinning yarn by hand on the wheel was felt. And the spinning wheel came. In the beginning here too, the slivers were supplied by the textile mills. But later on it was found that slivers also should be made by hand. Then onwards it was felt that we should begin at the beginning by having our own cotton independently.

But land is required for growing cotton plants. So the idea of Bhoodan Yajna entered our activity of service at last.

There was no question of starting the Bhoodan Yajna mission then, because the need of the times was to get Swaraj. But the movement for Swaraj was not fundamental or basic. It had a negative character. That was why it did not start with sowing the seed, but began at the top. Now, people are always attracted to the fruit, they want to taste it as soon as they can and are not interested in sowing the seed. However, now that we have achieved Swaraj, our beginning will have to root in Bhoodan and in nothing else. In a village where land is not distributed fairly, industries started merely from above would not be able to maintain themselves for long. The chief occupation of our country is agriculture and we can never hope to set up the other village industries if we were so foolish as to ignore it. We can set up village industries and can have a full plan on Sarvodaya lines in villages where we have received all land in gift as Bhoodan.

I have seen the work of Christian missionaries in Ranchi. They have been doing it continuously for the last hundred or hundred and fifty years. Yet their original enthusiasm has not dimmed in the least.

When I thought over the cause of this perennial enthusiasm I came to the conclusion that activities of this nature for the service of mankind should have the ideal of Jivandan, i.e., dedication of entire life to the work.

The other conclusion I came to was that we must give a book to the people. The entire Adivasi population here is without a book. The Christian missionaries have given them a book and when I saw Adivasi sisters singing hymns from one the other day my surprise equalled the respect I felt for them. I could see that these people were not without support, they have some kind of support.

I believe giving a book to the people is very essential. I have seen that the Tulsi Ramayana has been of great service in the Uttar Pradesh. No king or emperor has succeeded in keeping the people together as it has done. In the days when the Hindu religion was attacked from all sides the people felt they had something to fall back upon in order to stand up against them. The Tulsi Ramayana achieved the task of warding off the attacks. In Bengal I saw there were many books, but there was not one single book like the Tulsi Ramayana which could give to the ordinary illiterate peasant as well as to the great man of knowledge what they both wanted to take from it. There should in the same manner, be one book to inspire faith in all, as much in the man of letters as in the ignorant man. I did not find a book of that character in Bengal. That was the reason why the Uttar Pradesh did not suffer from as many attacks from various religions as Bengal did. Islam gave one book to all mankind and raised people who had fallen. Islam tells us, "It does not matter to what race you belong, but all of you have the right; go to the masjid and read the book."

I have seen that not only the Adivasis but regions after regions in our land seem to have no book to fall back upon.

By a book I do not mean a particular single work. Because we swear by the name of Sarvodaya it is our duty to present its philosophy to the people. We should have a fourfold view while presenting it. We should start with its basis, then present the interim shape it assumes in actual practice; then its technique or how it should work in the various fields of life, and lastly show the ultimate aim or the ideal to be achieved. We have to carry all these aspects of the Sarvodaya view of life to the people and thus cultivate faith for it among them.

I shall now say a few words about the method of work. After experimenting at Wardha I saw that merely moving about for propaganda did not serve the purpose. Some steady work should also be carried on along with it. But when steady work went on, Ashrams were established and organizations were set up, life in them was circumscribed within certain limits. They did not feel the need of keeping contact with the people living around them nor had they the time and the capacity for it. So all propaganda ceased. From both the experiences I came to

the conclusion that work should be carried on both ways — some work should be steady and some should be by moving about. We should establish a proper relation between steady work and propaganda work.

We have to think much regarding Khadi. Bapu used to say very often that the conception of Khadi went deep. Without Khadi we cannot have a plan of self-reliant villages or of village self-rule. Some friends had differences with Bapu in this matter. Some of his co-workers thought of giving Khadi the position of a guest in the scheme. A guest lives with the owner of the house for two or four days but he is not the owner of the place; that is someone else. In the same manner Khadi is a guest and textile mills are the owners of the house in their plan.

Now these friends have begun to encourage Khadi with a view to solve the problem of unemployment. But they think of making roads first in their plans of rebuilding the villages.

Now, I feel the utility of roads most because I move about on foot. But their scheme gives priority to making roads and of building good houses next. Thus in the programmes they draw up with the aim of giving work to the people, labour is not productive. The peculiarity of their way of thinking lies in their proposing only unproductive work. I believe roads and houses are no doubt useful and that the unemployed get work through them. But we should not look to Khadi as helping the solution of the problem of unemployment. Truly speaking it represents a view and a way of life. We may devote ten to fifteen years in building roads, houses etc. But after the programmes are completed no work would be left to the people. That is why I think that without Khadi the idea of village rule is impossible.

Till now some few people have experimented with the conception of self-sufficiency in the matter of cloth. But what we now seek to do is not to allow any cloth in the villages but Khadi though mills might be running all over the world. Just as though the law recognizes private property in land we have on our own done away with it, so also we wish to see that though mills might be working throughout the world our village will not allow mill cloth to enter it; it will allow only Khadi.

Then along with this programme we will have a programme of basic education. We have drawn out a plan for it and have named it a one-hour school. The teacher in the village will teach the children for an hour in the morning and the adults for an hour in the evening. The children will be taught crafts and industries along with reading and writing and experiments for improvements in the industries of the village will go on side by side.

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U. N. AND HUMAN RIGHTS

[Einstein wrote this in 1951 for the UNESCO. It holds good for the UNO even this day.]

In order to grasp the full significance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is well to be fully aware of the world situation that gave birth to the United Nations and to UNESCO. The devastation wrought by the wars of the last half century had brought home the fact to everybody that, with the present-day level of technical achievement, the security of nations could be based only on supra-national institutions and rules of conduct. It understood that, in the long run, an all-destroying conflict can be avoided only by the setting up of a world federation of nations.

So — as a modest beginning of international order — the United Nations was founded. This organization, however, is but a meeting ground for delegates of national governments and not for the peoples' representatives acting independently on the basis of their own personal convictions. Furthermore, U. N. decisions do not have binding force on any national government; nor do any concrete means exist by which decisions can be enforced.

The effectiveness of the United Nations is still further reduced by the fact that membership has been refused to certain nations, whose exclusion seriously affects the supra-national character of the organization. Yet, in itself, the fact that international problems are brought up and discussed in the broad light of day favours the peaceful solution of conflicts. The existence of a supra-national platform of discussion is apt to accustom the peoples gradually to the idea that national interests must be safeguarded by negotiation and not by brute force.

This psychological or educational effect I regard as the United Nations' most valuable feature. A world federation presupposes a new kind of loyalty on the part of man, a sense of responsibility that does not stop short at national boundaries. To be truly effective, such loyalty must embrace more than purely political issues. Understanding among different cultural groups, mutual economic and cultural aid are the necessary additions.

Only by such endeavour will the feeling of confidence be established that was lost owing to the psychological effect of the wars and sapped by the narrow philosophy of militarism and power politics. No effective institution for the collective security of nations is possible without understanding and a measure of reciprocal confidence.

Realizing that healthy international relations can be created only among populations made up of individuals who themselves are healthy and enjoy a measure of independence, the United Nations elaborated a Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted

by the U.N. General Assembly on December 10, 1948.

The Declaration establishes a number of universally comprehensive standards that are designed to protect the individual, to prevent his being exploited economically, and to safeguard his development and the free pursuit of his activities within the social framework.

It was scarcely to be avoided that the Declaration should take the form of a legalistic document, which in its rigidity may lead to endless discussion. It is impossible for such a text to take the great diversity of conditions of life in the different countries fully into account; in addition, it is unavoidable that such a text admits various interpretations of detail. The general tendency of the Declaration, however, is unmistakable and provides a suitable, generally acceptable basis for judgment and action.

To give formal recognition to standards and to adopt them as the guiding lines of action in the teeth of all the adversities of a changing situation are two very different things — as the impartial observer may see particularly in the history of religious institutions. The Declaration can exert an effective influence, if, and only if, the United Nations itself shows by its decisions and actions that it does embody, *de facto*, the spirit of this, its own Declaration.

(Reproduced from *The World Veteran*, May 1955)

GOD MADE THE COUNTRY

'God made the country and man made the town', wrote William Cowper. Professor Colin Clark, Director of the Institute for Research in Agricultural Economics at Oxford, is of the same opinion. He said :

> 'The strongest (reason) of all (for assisting the farmer) is that it is better to have our population well distributed through the country, rather than concentrated in a few industrial centres. This means also doing everything we can to build up villages and small country towns, as well as helping the farmers. On defence grounds alone there is strong argument for such dispersal. But in addition, almost every aspect of the country's life, social, political and cultural would be enriched thereby. Only a small minority of us will ever be actually farmers or farm workers; but we can all gain a great deal, in various hidden ways, by living in closer contact with nature, and not having a social organization more elaborate than is really necessary.
>
> 'The countryman can generally make for himself a fuller and more satisfying and more natural life than can the worker in a big industrial city. His life is not so dominated and distorted by his environment, and, as has been well said, "God willed that men should control material things, not that material things should control men."'

Gandhiji used to insist that every village or at least every small group of villages should be self-sufficient for the necessaries of life. Similarly the learned professor said :

> 'The subsidy programme should be so arranged as to ensure that a certain amount of these basic necessaries (grains, potatoes, vegetables, milk and a 'minimum' of meat) should be produced in every district; potatoes, for instance, would have to be grown in many counties where they are now hardly grown at all, and not left to specialized growers in the eastern counties. For, in modern warfare transport might break down almost completely. Under these conditions only farm production in their immediate neighbourhood would enable the people to survive. On these grounds also we should do everything we can to encourage part-time and amateur growing of vegetables, and let as many people as possible have gardens, instead of pursuing over present silly policy of housing them in blocks or flats at enormous expense.'

(*The Listener*, May 5, 1955, page 788).

V. G. D.

THH MILL AND THE CHARKHA

(*By J. C. Kumarappa*)

[The following is adapted from Shri J. C. Kumarappa's note on the 'Amber Charkha', in the *Gram Udyog Patrika* of August, 1955.]

Today the productive power of the mill, in comparison to its working cost, is greater because of various causes which are man-made. One of the chief items that is artificially kept low is fuel — coal, oil or electricity. These are supplied at so-called "prices" fixed on the basis of "cost" which do not represent the value of the materials. For instance, coal is a national patrimony. At the coal-pit its "cost" will be largely made up of the expenses incurred to bring the material to the surface. Then transport or freight is added to it before computing its "cost" to the mill. The value of this product of nature is placed at the disposal of the millowners at this partial rate. For instance, if we say it is given at Rs. 20/- a ton this price does not represent its value. In fact, this ought to be valued at the alternative cost of producing equal working power as compared with the man-power it displaces. This man-power, in its turn, should be computed at a rate at which a family could be maintained at an acceptable standard of living and not at the starvation level. Such a valuation may bring the cost of coal, we shall presume for argument's sake, to Rs. 160/- a ton. Then the difference, viz., Rs. 140/- is a national unseen subsidy given to the mills. Therefore to be able to compare the charkha with the mill this amount of the subsidy should be allowed for in the value of equal quantities of products.

What is needed is a careful study of the working costs of mills on the basis of a fair living standard of labour allowing for reasonable cost of fuel and power. Then, if we find, as it seems to us we shall, that the mills are not paying for themselves, we should take the courageous step to close them down and increase adequately the wages of the spinners.

[As Shri J. C. Kumarappa very clearly puts before us, the nation is subsidizing all power-driven industries, and the economic system tolerates it because the so-called science of economics does not note the fraud being played on the poor people. Will economists reply to this point raised by Shri J. C. Kumarappa, who is one of them, though not seeing eye to eye with their orthodoxy?

20-8-'55 M. P.]

HARIJAN

Sept. 3 1955

LANGUAGES AND PUBLIC SERVICES

(*By Maganbhai P. Desai*)

A friend from Madras draws my attention to a notification of the Government of India which says that for probationers in Indian Administrative Service, the qualifying tests will be in the following subjects — 1. Riding, 2. a Regional Language, and 3. Hindi, except for candidates who are examined in Hindi as a regional language under item 2 above.

It says further that " every probationer shall be examined in the regional language or one of the regional languages shown in column (2) of the Schedule against the State to which he is allotted. . . ."

The Schedule is as follows:

State (1)	Regional Languages (2)
Andhra	Telugu or Hindi
Assam	Assamese or Bengali
Bihar	Hindi, Bengali, Santhali or Oraon
Bombay	Marathi, Gujarati or Kannada
Madhya Pradesh	Hindi or Marathi
Madras	Tamil, Telugu, Kannada or Malayalam
Orissa	Oriya, Telugu or Bengali
Punjab	Hindi or Punjabi (in Gurmukhi script)
Uttar Pradesh	Hindi
West Bengal	Bengali or Hindi
Hyderabad	Marathi, Telugu, Kannada or Urdu
Madhya Bharat	Hindi
Mysore	Kannada
Patiala and East Punjab States Union	Punjabi (in Gurmukhi script) or Hindi
Rajasthan	Hindi
Saurashtra	Gujarati or Hindi
Travancore-Cochin	Malayalam or Tamil
Vindhya Pradesh	Hindi

The notification raises many questions. One of them is noted by the Madras correspondent as follows:

" The following States are announced as Hindi regions — Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Bharat, Rajasthan, and Vindhya Pradesh. The candidates from these regions will take only Hindi as their language, whereas the candidates from Andhra, Assam, Bombay, Madras, Orissa, West Bengal, Hyderabad, Mysore and Travancore-Cochin will have to take two languages, i.e. the regional language and Hindi. Thus, candidates of the Hindi-speaking regions are in an advantageous position of taking only one language. Others will be in a disadvantageous position, having to take two languages. Thus it is clear that the scales cannot, by this method, be held even between the candidates from Hindi and non-Hindi regions;

" Why not one of the Dravidian languages — Tamil, Telugu, Kannada or Malayalam be made an additional compulsory language for the candidates from the Hindi-speaking areas, so that there may be equal advantage for all and there may be interchange of ideas between the North and the South and strengthening of national solidarity? "

There is another point worthy of notice in the above Schedule. We see that Andhra, Pepsu, and Saurashtra are scheduled to have Hindi as a regional language. Urdu is mentioned against Hyderabad only, even though it obtains as a regional language, more or less, all over the areas where Hindi is mentioned as a regional language; for example U.P., Punjab, Bihar, Rajasthan etc. It is worth while to know the basis on which the regional languages are prescribed in the Schedule, for it raises important questions in regard to future administrative set-up.

Coming to the question raised by the Madras correspondent, I may just ask whether it would not be a better plan of qualifying tests if we say that these will be — 1. Riding 2. a Regional language other than the probationer's own, and 3. Hindi, the official Language of the Union. A probationer whose regional language is Hindi may be asked to undergo, under item 3, a test in Urdu, so that his Hindi will be enriched the more and will meet some of the requirements of the official Language of the Union under Art. 351 of the Constitution of India.

I do not quite cherish the phraseology of the North and the South in this connection, and desire that we think out the question in a broad and objective manner keeping in view, of course, the unity of our people and desiring to inculcate mutual love and regard for all our great national languages.

30-8-'55

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PILGRIM'S PROGRESS DAY BY DAY — VI

(*By Damodardas Mundada*)

A medical officer at one of his camps came to see Vinobaji and acquainted him with the difficulties he encountered in his work. "It is now about a hundred years," he said, "that we are running the Government Hospital here. There is a Danish Mission also here, which is working amongst the Adiwasis for the last fifty years. They did not get any response till last year when they have also started a Mission Hospital which is now attracting the villagers too much. We are rendering free service, while they are charging one rupee per injection."

Vinobaji thereupon inquired why the people were so much attracted towards this Mission Hospital. Giving his reasons, the medical officer pointed out how the Mission carried on propaganda with the help of their jeep car. They also received medicines very cheap from their countries, he added.

Vinobaji observed that cheap medicine was not the only attraction, nor was propaganda the only cause behind this attraction. As for the medicines, they are supplied free to the Government Hospitals by the Government. The real reason, he emphasized, was not the medicine, but the book which accompanied the medicine. While one gave only the medicine useful for the flesh, the other supplied also food necessary for the soul. "You have only a bottle, while they have a mission," remarked Vinobaji.

"But are they justified in carrying on their religious propaganda?", was the next question.

"How can we stop them from doing that? Are they carrying on any anti-Government or any anti-social activities? They are delivering only the message of Jesus, and we cannot stop them from doing so," replied Vinobaji. He also pointed out how the Christian Missionaries at Chhota Nagpur had awakened the Adiwasis against their exploitation by the moneylenders. They have been able to organize three lakhs of the Adiwasis who are converts to Christianity.

In the post-prayer speech that evening Vinobaji stressed upon the need of providing a Book of Faith to Adiwasis and others. How he wished that Gita, Ramayana and Bhagwat were universally read and studied by the residents in this area! The ban by the orthodox section on the use of these scriptures by the Adiwasis, or for that matter by anyone else, must become a thing of the past, he added, and a living faith must be created in the minds of these Adiwasis for the scriptures. He had, after deep thinking, come to the conclusion that a Book of Faith must be provided to those sections of the society which are devoid of any such spiritual base.

In this connection, Vinobaji pointed out how, in his opinion, there was no book today which in its present form was worth presenting to the friends. We will have to make selections and supplement them by new additions, he added. He was also very clear that there was no need of any agency between God and his devotees. "Did Shankaracharya advocate any such agency? But there were disciples who were eager to bring in their *gurus* in between, and it were these disciples who advocated that God could not be realized without the help of a Christ or a Mohammed. Let us, therefore, collect the essence of all the religions and present it directly to the people," he said.

In this connection, Vinobaji pointed out the great cultural revolution that was wrought in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar by a single book: the *Ramacharit Manas* of Sant Tulsidas. According to Vinobaji, it was this book alone which saved these provinces from the attacks of the proselytizers. It was the lack of such a book that made some of the parts of the country victims of such attacks.

The analysis regarding the lack of a book throws light on the cause of the mass scale conversions in this country whether they be to Islam or to Christianity. It also explains the secret of the missionaries' success in this country, especially in the tribal areas.

It was, therefore, not only the Adiwasis who are deprived of such a book, but many a province also felt the need of some such firm reliance and source of reviving faith. By book Vinobaji did not mean any specific printed matter only. "We speak of Sarvodaya ideals. Let us present its philosophy to the people, viz., the basic principles of the philosophy, its structure, process and the ultimate objective. This fourfold approach was the need of the hour. If we are able to pass it on to the people, that may help in creating a living faith in them about Sarvodaya ideals."

We have witnessed the wave of rejoicings experienced by these Adiwasi friends when they were told that they should read Ramayana and Bhagwat, and that it was the part of our constructive programme to equip them with such qualification. "Shall we be permitted to read Bhagwat?", their leader asked us with tears of joy in his eyes. Their joy knows no bound when, at the land re-distribution ceremony, they receive, together with the land certificates, a copy of the Oriya Gita Pravachan also.

The Adiwasis have neither their own book nor their own script. Roman script was introduced years ago, but hardly a few are acquainted with it. They must pick up either Oriya or Telugu and should also know Nagari, the script of the national language.

9-8-'55

ROLE OF FILMS IN PUBLIC LIFE

(*By Suresh Ramabhai*)

For some time past a very interesting controversy has been going on in the press, specially in the film papers. Its genesis lies in a representation submitted by sixty-four members (all Congressmen) of Parliament to the Congress Working Committee. They are reported to have regretted that most of the films exhibited in the country are not producing very happy effects on our young boys and girls and pleaded for a sound action to meet the menace. Consequently the Congress Working Committee is stated to have asked the Union Ministry for Information and Broadcasting to look into the matter and do the needful. In other words, the Congress M.P.'s appeal boils down to a plea for a stricter censorship of films, which has been highly resented by the film-magnates.

Foremost amongst them is the President of the Film Federation of India. He has, naturally, come forward with a very high-spirited protest. He has called upon the "narrow-minded bigots and social reactionaries" to stop their "campaign of calumny" against motion pictures. Deploring the Congress Working Committee's attitude to drag itself in this "controversy", he is said to have observed that the Committee had been less than fair to the film industry in expressing its views without hearing the industry's view-point and that the action of the M.P.'s, of the Information Ministry and of the Congress Working Committee was a proof positive of the persistent efforts "to blacken the cinema industry" and to attempt to bring the motion picture under official control. Nay, he is reported to have characterized the charges made by 64 M.P.'s against films as "a condemnation of the Ministry responsible for censorship." He argues, rightly so, why such "objectionable" films had on earth been passed by the censor, and if the latter had certified them, the matter warranted an enquiry on the administrative level, rather than "a wholesale condemnation of the industry and legislative interference."

The public has no information whether any action has been taken (or is likely to be taken) on the Congress communication. Nor one knows whether the Government proposes to meet the open challenge thrown by the gallant film-chief. But this quarrel between the Film-Ministry and the film-industry is more or less of a domestic nature,

in which outsiders need not and should not interfere. But there is a public, and very vital, aspect of the question which deserves serious consideration.

The fact of the popularity of films cannot be denied these days. Who has not seen such a heavy rush on the cinema booking-offices as is very rarely found even on a railway station? Often they take to *mar-pit* and police help is sought. Who has not noticed urchins discussing the life and career of different film-stars? Who has not met school and college boys and girls singing film-songs? Besides, one can easily come across 'civilized' families awaiting the arrival of a particular picture more anxiously than they would do of their late-at-night-returning son or daughter. On the other hand, there are such scores of families living in the cities as hardly visit any theatre. The cinema, therefore, forms a very important, though not inevitable, part of the city life. Also, the film-industry is the largest industry of our country, next only to textile. It earns several crores for the Government every year. The interest of the Government in this industry cannot, therefore, be too much emphasized.

It is high time, however, that the film industry did some really serious thinking about its performances and products. Let apart the criticism offered by the Congress M.P.'s, will it not be advisable for the film industry to examine the situation and take the public into its confidence? In fact, the very aims and objects of the film must be reviewed afresh. The role of the films in public life is, to my mind, the same as that of the newspapers. Like a good newspaper a good film has to discharge three essential responsibilities:

(i) To understand popular taste and feeling and to give full expression to it;

(ii) To rouse among the people certain desirable sentiments;

(iii) To expose popular defects and convey people's grievances.

It is clear that if the film industry of any country carries out only the first of these functions, it is not a real friend of its people. It then plays the role of a time-serving veteran exploiting the weakness of his friend or customer. As the proverb has it, a wise enemy is better than an undiscerning friend. Be as the profits earned by the industry may, I, for one, cannot help feeling that our film industry is in the state of the latter. One may ask whether it has undergone any basic change in outlook after the attainment of freedom. If the progress of the films is to be measured only by the number of pictures produced, or by film-festivals and displays in foreign countries, or by the increase in the total outlay, it must then be painfully confessed that our film industry is in a very infant stage.

To be frank, our film industry seems to be rather shy or timid. On the one hand, it has to cater to popular taste (or ill-taste) and on the other, it has to woo the Government. While producing a new film its anxiety is to see that it catches people's fancy and that it does not go against the declared policy and schemes of the Government. It seems little concerned with the fact whether the new film will be desirable for the people or whether it will open the official eye. The whole difference lies in a thing being popular with the people or being desirable for the people. A sweet dish is popular with a sick man but what is desirable for him is the bitter pill. Silence is desirable for one wild with rage, but he would prefer to get rid of his adversary, if need be, by a dagger. It requires daring to give a bitter dose to the sick man and to snatch away the dagger from the hands of the angry. One wonders why Indian films do not exhibit the same courage and initiative.

Going further it can be said that our films, in general, are yet rather cut off from the country's life, i.e., from the life of the poor and the miserable who have never known what a full meal is. In other words, our films do portray the life of the rich or well-to-do but not of the poor or miserable. Besides, their contact with village life is very rare and meagre. If our post-freedom days have been marked by more unemployment, rising use of intoxicants and smoking, higher woman traffic or greater want and under-feeding, why, one wonders, do not our films delineate the same and direct towards it the attention of the people as also of the authority? Of course, it is a different matter altogether if the industry views these developments as a welcome and inspiring feature. If bodily labour should be the order of the day in the country, if every adult, educated or otherwise, must perform some productive manual labour every day, if untouchability must disappear, if the profession of the Bhangi must go or become all-citizens' work, if Swadeshi goods must be increasingly employed, why should not our films inspire the people accordingly? If our administration should not be top-heavy, if the gulf between the high salaries and low is disgusting, if bribery and corruption must end, if police high-handedness and undue interference in official work must be tabooed, why should not our films warn all concerned of the same? If dowry ought to be abolished, if the *house-devi* should not remain *choolha-devi*, if our sisters must not be loaded with jewellery and used as bank-safes, if the woman must not be treated as an article of luxury but as an equal of man — why dare not our films take a lead in this direction?

More illustrations need not be added. The only question that our films must be able to answer is: Do they inspire our youth to grow fearless and truthful, tolerant and brave? Will an imitation of the life depicted in our films enable them to face undaunted the enemy without or the differences and troubles within? Do they enthuse our citizen with the faith: 'I am a free citizen of free India and shall not sell this freedom at any cost'? Or do they stir him with the fire: 'I should go into the interior to serve the poorest, the lowliest and the lost'?

Again, music is an essential ingredient of all pictures. What sort of music is that? I am no expert to offer any opinion on its merits. But one thing that frequently strikes one's imagination is that these films make almost no use of that great immortal store of songs and poetry which has been left to us by our saints and sages. Why do not our films convey this priceless treasure to every child? Do not the sayings of saints like Kabir, Nanak, Tukaram, Chaitanya, Tiruvalluwar, and the like, deserve an audience in the film-world and thus reach every home? When songs are required for films, why is this valuable legacy not made full use of? Or, does the film industry want us to believe that there is no such thing in our literature as may be useful for the moderns?

Our film-friends would have to devote earnest thought to these and allied issues. They have played enough with people's weaknesses or ignorance. As stated at the outset, they must give to the people what the latter like. But that should not be their be-all and end-all. Films should not be a source of amusement alone but of human-elevation and nation-building too. In fact, a good film connotes a good novel and a good drama combined. Its coverage should be greater and deeper than any work of art. There is a proverb in Hindi: The *kavi* (poet) reaches places where even the *ravi* (sun) does not. One can step further and say: The *chhavi* (film) reaches places where even the *kavi* does not. A good film can infuse one with such lofty inspiration as may lead him or her to negotiate high and still higher summits. May our friends of the film industry realize their grave responsibility and may God crown their righteous efforts with radiant glory!

By Mahatma Gandhi
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CONCEPT OF BASIC EDUCATION

[Being a statement about the concept of Basic Education issued by Shri Shriman Narayan, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Basic Education and Shri K. G. Saiyidain, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Education.]

The term 'Basic Education' has been interpreted and sometimes misinterpreted, in a variety of ways. This is to some extent understandable because it is a comparatively recent development and its concept and techniques are still in the making. It seems necessary, therefore, to state clearly what we mean by Basic Education.

Broadly speaking, we would like to point out that the concept of Basic Education is the same as defined in the Report of the Basic National Education Committee (The Zakir Hussain Committee) and elucidated by the Central Advisory Board of Education. We are clear that the basic principles and techniques, as made out in that Report, should guide and shape educational reconstruction in India. So far as the provision of eight years of compulsory universal schooling, and the use of the mother-tongue as the medium of instruction, are concerned, there is no difference of opinion about them. They have now come to be universally accepted and need no further elucidation, except in so far as it may be necessary to stress the intrinsic wholeness of the entire period of Basic Education, covering the junior as well as senior basic grades. The other implications and features of Basic Education that need to be clarified and stressed are the following :

1. Basic Education, as conceived and explained by Mahatma Gandhi, is essentially an education for life and, what is more, an education through life. It aims at creating eventually a social order free from exploitation and violence. That is why productive, creative and socially useful work in which all boys and girls may participate, irrespective of any distinction of caste or class, is placed at the very centre of Basic Education.

2. The effective teaching of a basic craft, thus, becomes an essential part of education at this stage, as productive work, done under proper conditions, not only makes the acquisition of much related knowledge more concrete and realistic but also adds a powerful contribution to the development of personality and character, and instils respect and love for all socially useful work. It is also to be clearly understood that the sale of products of craft-work will meet some part of the expenditure incurred on running the school or that the products will be used by the school children for getting a mid-day meal or a school uniform or help to provide some of the school furniture and equipment.

3. As there has been controversy and difference of opinion regarding the position of craft work in basic schools, it is necessary to state clearly that the fundamental objective of Basic Education is nothing less than the development of the child's total personality which will include productive efficiency as well. In order to ensure that the teaching of the basic craft is efficient and its educative possibilities are fully realized, we must insist that the articles made should be of good quality, as good as children at that stage of their development can make them socially useful and, if necessary, saleable. The acquisition of skills and the love for good craftsmanship have deeper educative significance than merely playing with the tools and raw materials which is usually encouraged in all good activity schools. This productive aspect should in no case be relegated to the background as has been usually the case so far, because directly as well as indirectly, efficiency in the craft practised undoubtedly contributes to the all-round development of the child. It sets up before children high standards of achievement and gives them the right kind of training in useful habits and attitudes like purposeful application, concentration, persistence and thoughtful planning. While it may not be possible to lay down specific targets for productivity at this stage, it should be the teacher's endeavour to explore its economic possibilities fully with the emphatic stipulation that this does not in any way conflict with the educational aims and objectives already defined. However, it has to be stated that, in the upper classes of junior basic schools and in the senior basic schools, it should not be difficult for States to lay down certain minimum targets of production in the light of carefully assessed experiences.

4. In the choice of basic crafts which are to be integrated into school work, we should adopt a liberal approach and make use of such crafts as have significance from the point of view of intellectual content, provide scope for progressive development of knowledge and practical efficiency. The basic craft must be such as will fit into the natural and social environment of the school and hold within it the maximum of educational possibilities. The idea that has been wrongly created in the minds of some people that the mere introduction of a craft in a school e.g. spinning can make it a basic school does grave injustice to the concept of Basic Education.

5. In Basic Education as, indeed, in any good scheme of education — knowledge must be related to activity, practical experience and observation. To ensure this, Basic Education rightly postulates that the study of the curricular content should be intelligently related to three main centres of correlation viz., craft work, the natural environment and the social environment. The well-trained and understanding teacher should be able to integrate most of the knowledge that he wishes to impart to one or the other of these centres of correlation, which form important and natural foci of interest for

the growing child. If he is not able to do so, it either means that he lacks the necessary ability or that the curriculum has been burdened with items of knowledge which are not really important and significant at that particular stage. It should also be realized, however, that there may be certain items in the syllabus which cannot be easily correlated directly with any of the three above centres. In such cases, there should be no objection to these being taught according to the methods of teaching adopted in any good school. This means, that, even in the case of such lessons, the principle of interest and motivation and the value of expression-work will be utilized. In any case, forced and mechanical 'associations' which pass for correlation in many schools should be carefully avoided.

6. The emphasis on productive work and crafts in basic schools should not be taken to mean that the study of books can be ignored. The basic scheme does not postulate that the book is the only or the main avenue to knowledge and culture and that, at this age, properly organized productive work can in many ways contribute more richly both to the acquiring of knowledge and the development of personality. But the value of the book, both as a source of additional systematized knowledge and of pleasure cannot be denied and a good library is as essential in a basic school as in any other type of good schools.

7. The basic scheme envisages a close integration between the school and the community so as to make education as well as the children more social-minded and co-operative. It endeavours to achieve this, firstly, by organizing the school itself as a living and functioning community, — with its social and cultural programmes and other activities — secondly, by encouraging students to participate in the life around the school and in organizing various types of social service to the local community. Students' self-government is another important feature in Basic Education which should be envisaged as a continuous programme of training in responsibility and in the democratic way of living. In this way, the basic school not only helps in cultivating qualities of self-reliance, co-operation and respect for dignity of labour but also becomes a vital factor in the creation of dynamic social order.

8. Basic Education should no longer be regarded as meant exclusively for the rural areas. It should be introduced equally in urban areas both because of its intrinsic suitability and also to remove the impression that it is some kind of inferior education designed only for the village children ! For this purpose, necessary modifications may have to be made in the choice of basic crafts for urban schools and even in the syllabus but the general ideals and methods of Basic Education should remain the same.

AMEND VACCINATION ACT

To

The Editor of *Harijan*

Sir,

In *Harijan* of June 25, 1955 an Editorial Note is published in which it is stated that the Government of Madras has abolished compulsory vaccination for conscientious objectors in Madras.

Mahatma Gandhi was opposed to vaccination and there are today many in India who after a study of the problem, have a conscientious objection to vaccination of themselves, their children and wards and others in their charge, on various grounds.

The process of preparing vaccine from calf involves pain and suffering to the calf; the process of introducing this serum prepared from pus etc. into the human body by scratching the skin is revolting to many minds and there is an obvious objection to the putting of this poison deliberately into one's healthy body with a view to produce pistules of poisonous matter on the body. There is a wide disparity of opinions as to the immunity produced, if any produced, and the period of immunity.

About fifty years ago compulsory vaccination was abolished in England. There are millions of English children who have never been vaccinated during this half a century. Statistics show that small-pox has been practically abolished from England and this disappearance is due solely to cleanliness and good sanitation. Surely it is possible for this country to emulate the cleanliness and sanitation of England. There is at present many a theory or belief of the Western system of medicine which has no foundation according to the Ayurvedic or Unani system of medicine and the present theory of vaccination is open to challenge on various grounds.

Science has been obliged to reject or change its theories from time to time and the theory of vaccination has not proved to be unchallengeable and there are many eminent medical men who have opposed it and are even at present against it.

In view of this, it should surely be considered the right of any individual who conscientiously does not believe in this theory of vaccination to refuse to be compelled to put into his healthy body a poisonous virus.

Madras should be congratulated on granting exemption from vaccination to conscientious objectors by an amendment of the Madras City Municipality Act.

May I hope that the Bombay Government with especially Shri Shantilal Shah as its Health Minister will inaugurate this democratic reform of giving to a conscientious objector, the legitimate right to decline to let a poisonous virus to be unwillingly injected into the healthy body of himself, his children or others in his charge ? I hope this plea will receive due consideration.

Yours faithfully,

117 Lamington Cross Road, Bombay-7.

Rustomji M. Alpaiwala, B.A., LL.B., Barrister-at-Law

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